

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 101

SO 011 114

AUTHOR Hensley, Thomas R.; And Others
TITLE Teaching Political Science in a Study Abroad Program: An Examination of Impacts on Student Attitudes.
SPONS AGENCY Kent State Univ., Ohio. Center for International and Comparative Programs.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (New York, New York, August 31-September 3, 1978)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents; *Changing Attitudes; College Students; Comparative Analysis; *Educational Research; Ethnocentrism; Foreign Students; Global Approach; Higher Education; International Education; International Organizations; International Programs; Literature Reviews; Peer Influence; *Political Science; *Program Evaluation; Self Esteem; *Student Attitudes; *Study Abroad; Values; World Affairs

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the impact of a semester-abroad political science program on the attitudes and behavior of college students. Participants included 52 students in a 1977 Kent State University Geneva Semester Program. The hypothesis was that positive attitude changes on worldmindedness would: (1) occur among students participating in the study abroad program; (2) relate positively to the enjoyment of the students' overall experience; and (3) relate positively to the closeness of contact with non-Americans. For the study, questionnaires were administered which focused upon attitudes of worldmindedness, support for the United Nations, self-esteem, and ambiguity. Responses of participants in the study abroad program were compared with responses of 17 students in a class on international organization at Kent State University. Findings based on simple percentages and multiple regression analysis of responses indicated that significant change occurred on only one variable, self-esteem. The conclusion is that relatively brief experience in another culture has a limited impact on attitudes such as worldmindedness and ethnocentrism. A major implication of the study is that claims about the potential of overseas study programs to produce attitude and behavioral changes among student participants should be given careful scrutiny. (Author/DB)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED159101

SEP 19 1978

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE IN A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM:
AN EXAMINATION OF IMPACTS ON STUDENT ATTITUDES

Thomas P. Hensley

Deborah K. Sell

Murray I. Fishel

Kent State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thomas R.
Hensley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Prepared for delivery at the 1978 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, The New York Hilton Hotel, New York, New York, August 31-September 3, 1978. Copyright by The American Political Science Association, 1978.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Kent State University Center for International and Comparative Programs for its financial support of this project.

58 01114

INTRODUCTION

Most political scientists spend the majority of their time in teaching. In this enterprise, substantial efforts are made to measure the extent to which students have mastered the substantive material of courses. Little research has been undertaken, however, to determine the broader effects of political science instruction upon the values, attitudes, and beliefs of students. While these types of effects are certainly more difficult to measure than the mastery of basic course material, few would deny the importance of the potential attitudinal and behavioral effects on students of college teaching. In light of the methodological skills which have characterized the development of the discipline over the past few decades and the increasing importance being given within the discipline to teaching concerns, it is clearly appropriate for enhanced attention to be given to studying the impact of political science instruction on the attitudes and behavior of the students we teach.

This paper is concerned with assessing the effects of a unique overseas political science program on the attitudes of student participants. The Kent State University Geneva Semester Program provides undergraduate students from throughout the United States the opportunity to study international politics and international organization in Geneva, Switzerland, the European headquarters of the United Nations. Our concern is assessing attitude change in regard to two internationalist attitudes -- worldmindedness and support for the United Nations -- and two psychological variables -- self-esteem and tolerance of ambiguity. These

attitudes are important to study because among the most prominent educational justifications for study abroad programs are that they can increase understanding of other countries, promote a more internationalist outlook among participants, and contribute to personal growth and development. Study abroad programs involve substantial commitments and expenses for both the students and the sponsoring educational institutions, and hence it is important to know what types of effects they have upon student participants. While this study does not examine all of the possible results which could occur from an overseas educational program, it does analyze several important political and psychological attitudes which are most likely to be affected.

ATTITUDE CHANGE: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two broad questions guide our analysis: (1) Did student attitudes change? and (2) If changes did occur, how can we explain the changes? An examination of the relevant literature provides some useful guidance in formulating research propositions related to these general questions.

Do Student Attitudes Change? In examining the question of whether we should expect student attitudes to change, three general areas of scholarship provide us with useful insights. In a general sense, this study focuses upon the subject of political socialization, and hence this field of research needs to be reviewed. At a more specific level, the study is concerned with the socialization effects of political science instruction, and hence we can usefully examine previous research dealing with the effects of traditional political science teaching on students' attitudes and also earlier research on the impact of study abroad pro-

grams on student attitudes. These two bodies of literature can be viewed as subdivisions of the subject of political socialization.

Our first concern is with the general political socialization literature. Much of this scholarship has focused upon the development of political attitudes by young children (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1967), while relatively little attention has been given to the subject of changes in political attitudes among post-adolescents. The analysis of attitude change among adults has been identified as an important research frontier, however, (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975) and evidence is beginning to accumulate which suggests that alterations in political attitudes can be expected when individuals encounter adult socializing agencies and experiences (Rohter, 1975; Pollock, 1975; Jennings and Markus, 1977). This brief overview of political socialization research serves to establish that attitude change might be expected to occur among college students in an overseas educational program. We can now turn to the two other bodies of literature which focus more closely upon the specific concerns of this study.

One area involves studies of the effects of traditional political science instructional programs upon students' political orientations. A recent review by Lamare (1975) provides a most useful summary of these studies. Lamare suggests that empirical studies of the socialization effects of political science courses can be divided into two classes, those in which students were asked directly the impact of teachers and courses on their political orientations and those in which before-and-after measurement of student attitudes were undertaken. In regard to the first class, studies by Middleton and Putney (1964) and Jacob (1957) reveal

that "students perceptually attribute important roles in the political socialization process to courses and teachers" (Lamare, 1975, p. 427). These findings are consistent with several more impressionistic studies suggesting the impact of college attendance generally on political orientations (Key, 1961; Lane, 1968). Although these studies point to the role of political science classes as socialization agencies, Lamare cautions that the studies involving before-and-after measurement of student attitudes reveal rather different findings (Christenson and Capretta, 1968; Garrison, 1968; Somit, Wilke and Cooley, 1970). These studies "suggest a pattern of reinforcement and accentuation, but not radical alteration" of student attitudes and orientations (Lamare, 1975, p. 428). A recent study of racial tolerance by Jackman (1978) provides further evidence of the limited effect of higher education on basic political attitudes.

This review of studies on the effects on student attitudes of traditional classroom instruction suggests that we should not expect much change to occur among students who participate in the Geneva Semester Program. It is important to recognize, however, that the Geneva Semester Program involves students in a unique learning experience in a foreign country. Lamare has suggested that "probably the student's immediate personal environment would have to be restructured if political resocialization were to be possible" (Lamare, 1975, p. 429).

Lamare's suggestion leads us directly into the third area of literature of concern in our study, research on the impact of overseas educational programs on student participants. This scholarship can be divided into two subcomponents, research on non-American students in the

United States and analyses of American students studying abroad.

Flack (1976) has written a most useful review of the literature dealing with the results and effects of study by non-American students in the United States. One of his concerns was assessing the effects of these experiences on non-American students' values and attitudes. Flack writes:

"Change of attitude" studies abound. It can be viewed as established that foreign students, as a result of their sojourn, "change." The evidence further indicates that they perceive themselves to have changed for "the better" in knowledge, personal and professional competence, self-assuredness, and in a sense of enhanced resourcefulness, effectiveness, and ambition.

...there is also convincing evidence that, at least in the realm of attitudes, ex-foreign students have acquired a more realistic perspective on their former host society, and with it a more analytical and differentiated capacity to view their own, as well as other societies in socio-historico-economic and not primarily in ideological or idealized terms (Flack, 1975, p. 116).

Flack's review provides evidence that overseas educational experiences do have an impact on student attitudes, but the review does not focus upon American students. We therefore turn now to a series of research projects focusing upon the effects of overseas educational programs on the attitudes of American college students.

The conclusion one must draw from a review of these studies (Smith, 1955; McGuigan, 1958; Leonard, 1964; Kafka, 1968; Nash, 1976) is much less optimistic than the judgment made by Flack. In general, the results of these studies reveal that overseas educational programs have generally not had much impact on the attitudes of student participants. Smith concluded, for example, that "a relatively brief experience in another culture has a limited impact on general attitudes" and furthermore a student's post-sojourn attitudes are "determined more by what his attitudes are like before he leaves than by what happens to him while he is away"

(Smith, 1955, p. 475). McGuigan reached a rather similar conclusion: "Modifications of the personality as a result of intercultural experiences are rather rare" (McGuigan, 1958, p. 59). A recent study by Nash found, however, that students participating in a University of Connecticut junior year abroad program did show significant changes in some of the attitudes being studied (Nash, 1976).

This review of several areas of scholarship on attitude change provides us with a somewhat mixed picture about the likelihood of significant attitude change occurring among students in the Geneva Semester Program. On the one hand, the general political socialization literature suggests that attitude change might be expected, as does a review of the impact of overseas educational programs on non-American students. On the other hand, most, but not all, before-and-after studies of both traditional and overseas educational experiences point to the limited effects of college instruction on students' attitudes. We therefore approach our analysis recognizing that if attitude change does occur, the change is likely to be somewhat modest.

How Do We Explain Attitude Change? If alterations in students' attitudes are found, it will then become important to seek explanations for the changes which have occurred. One could of course escape this concern by simply attributing the change to the "overseas experience." This creates more confusion than insight. What specific characteristics of the environment seem to have the strongest effect upon student attitudes? Are there particular characteristics of student participants which tend to be associated with changes in attitudes? Do particular types of experiences in the program tend to result in attitude change?

A survey of the earlier studies dealing with the impact of overseas programs on student attitudes provides disappointingly little theoretical guidance in regard to these types of questions. Fortunately, two recent studies dealing with general overseas experiences have helped to address this problem. Kelman was the first to emphasize the need for greater theoretical concern (Kelman, 1975). In the study Kelman argues that theories of attitude change can help not only to clarify the types of attitudinal effects that international programs may have but also to identify the factors which can enhance favorable programs. Drawing upon his own previous work as well as several other studies, Kelman suggests several independent variables which are likely to be of central significance to the development of favorable attitudes and personal ties with a host country. These include the opportunity for "genuine contact with nationals of the host country and for involvement in various aspects of its life"; the "treatment the visitor receives at the hands of the host"; the extent to which the visitor's general experience has been "positive and rewarding"; and the "preconceptions and motivations of the visitor" (Kelman, 1975, p. 211). Salter and Teger (1976) have provided support for the ideas set forth by Kelman. Salter and Teger argue that attitude change is associated with the type of personal contacts experienced and the personal enjoyment of the overall program by the participants in an overseas program. Salter and Teger are even more specific than Kelman because they advance a theory of generalization of effect, which posits that while both the variables of genuine contact and satisfaction can affect attitudes, the extent to which the experience is positive or negative is the primary determinant of attitude change. Thus, Salter

and Teger suggest that when participants in an overseas program have a generally positive experience, there is a halo effect or generalization effect which enhances positive attitude change along a number of dimensions.

The basic conceptual model which we will be testing can now be set forth. As shown in Figure 1, we are positing that a student's attitudes after the program will be influenced primarily by three variables: the student's attitude before the program, the enjoyment of the program, and the degree of contact with the nationals of the host country. Multivariate analysis techniques will allow us to test the relative importance of these respective independent variables.

THE KENT STATE GENEVA SEMESTER PROGRAM

The Geneva Semester Program is held once each year from mid-January to June in Geneva, Switzerland. Sponsored by Kent State's Center for International and Comparative Programs and open to American college students, the 1977 program was divided into two components -- French and United Nations studies. The present study is concerned, however, only with students enrolled in the UN component of the Geneva Semester. These students were all housed together at a Geneva-based student residence, located within walking distance of the U.N. headquarters.

The basic goal of the UN component of the program is to provide participants with substantive, first-hand knowledge of the UN system, employing as its primary setting the European home of the UN. Throughout the program students in the UN component received formal coursework on the UN system from both Kent State faculty members and adjunct faculty from Geneva. That coursework was supplemented by twice weekly briefings

at Geneva-based UN agencies. Finally, during the last two weeks of the Semester the UN students travelled to several major European cities to have additional briefings at other international organizations. In combination, these activities, plus independent study of the UN system, served as the primary methods of providing students with current, first-hand knowledge of the UN system. Students were also able to select courses dealing with French language study, European history, and Swiss society.

In 1977, 52 students participated in the UN component of the program. Of that number, 20 (38%) were regular Kent State students, while 32 (62%) were students in other American colleges and universities. The program attracted students from a variety of university settings: 14 (27%) from small liberal arts colleges, two (4%) from small state colleges, four (8%) from medium sized institutions, and 32 (62%) from large state universities. Sixteen (31%) were sophomores, 29 (56%) were juniors, and six (12%) were seniors.

The academic interests of the students varied considerably. Twenty-two different majors were identified. The two largest groups majored in political science (38%) and education (12%). As for their academic record, students in the 1977 Geneva program had grade point averages which were quite good, with eight (16%) having GPAs between 3.5 and 4.0, 30 (58%) with averages between 3.0 and 3.49, 11 (21%) with grades between 2.5 and 2.9, and three (6%) with averages less than 2.5.

The Geneva Semester attracted students who were, for the most part, members of the middle class. Of the 52 participants, only five (10%) classified themselves "upper class," and only one (2%) identified himself/

herself as "lower class." Twenty-one (41%) responded that they were "upper middle class," 19 (36%) said they were "middle class," and five (10%) identified themselves as "lower middle class."

Finally, the students in the UN component entered their Geneva experience with a modest to high interest in international politics. Thirty-two (62%) and 12 (23%) indicated that they paid attention to international affairs "some of the time" or "all of the time" respectively. Similarly, 12 students (23%) said they had a moderate interest in international politics, 21 (40%) had moderate to high interest, and 17 (38%) had a high interest in international affairs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. Social psychologists studying attitude change tend to focus on experimental rather than field research because of the far greater control they can exercise over the variables under study. Our research is of course field rather than experimental, but it is still possible to introduce certain controls into the research through the use of panel data, a control group, and multivariate statistical analysis. To gain panel data, we administered a lengthy questionnaire to the 52 students during their orientation period in the United States, and a similar questionnaire was completed by each student at the end of the program. For a control group, we used a group of 17 students enrolled at Kent State University in a class on international organization. Unfortunately, the class at Kent State was not held during the same period in which the Geneva Semester Program was conducted, but it did provide us with a similar group of students who were exposed to some of the same course content as the group in Geneva.

While the use of panel data and a control group involves little that is controversial, substantial debate exists regarding the appropriate statistical techniques to use in attitude change studies. In a recent attitude change study, Farley and Newkirk (1977) argue that Solomon's four-group, before-after design can and should be utilized in analyzing attitude change relating to educational programs. While it is true that this design is excellent because of the strong controls it imposes, Farley and Newkirk seem to fail to realize that the key to this or any experimental design is the random assignment of individuals to the groups being studied. But no study of students who have signed up for an actual class or program can claim to have this necessary randomization, for an undeniable element of self-selection enters into such activities. While we do not reject the analysis of variance approach associated with the Solomon design, a review of the extensive methodological literature on measuring attitude change resulting from educational experiences convinces us that the most valuable statistical technique in such studies is multiple regression analysis. This position has been cogently argued by Manning and Dubois (1962) and has been reaffirmed more recently by Cronbach and Furby (1970) and also Linn and Slinde (1977). Further, recent studies of changes in political attitudes have also relied heavily upon multiple regression analysis (Jennings and Markus, 1977; Jackman, 1978).

Scales. One final methodological concern which needs to be raised is the construction of the scales for both the dependent and independent variables in the study. When this discussion is completed, we can then turn to an analysis of the data.

The primary focus of the questionnaire was to measure students' attitudes concerning worldmindedness, support for the United Nations, self-esteem, and tolerance of ambiguity. The attitude of worldmindedness was measured through a 32 item instrument of Likert-type questions which were originally developed by Sampson and Smith (1957) to measure an international frame of reference rather than specific knowledge about or interest in international affairs. This scale is presented and discussed in Robinson's Measures of Political Attitudes (1968, pp. 302-305). The self-esteem scale, developed by Rosenberg (1965), focuses upon the self-acceptance aspect of self-esteem. It is based upon ten items answered in Likert-type format. A description and analysis of the scale can be found in Robinson and Shaver's Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes (1973, pp. 81-83). The tolerance of ambiguity scale, developed by Budner (1962), consists of 16 Likert-type items which measure the tendency to view ambiguous situations as desirable. Discussion of this scale can also be found in Robinson and Shaver (1973, pp. 401-405). We were unable to find a tested scale which measured the attitude of support for the United Nations. We therefore took questions from a variety of sources, including Lutzker's 1960 internationalism scale (1960), a 1970 Gallup poll, a 1963 Roper poll, and items which two of the authors had developed in an earlier research project. Altogether, 14 items were used. While a straight additive technique could be used to ascertain cumulative scores on the attitudes of worldmindedness, self-esteem, and tolerance of ambiguity because these scales had been well tested previously, this was not the situation with the United Nations support items. We therefore subjected the 14 items to factor analysis, with the result that 11 items

emerged as sharing a common basis for the scale.

Mention also needs to be made of the manner in which we measured the independent variables of enjoyment of the experience and closeness of contact with nationals of the host country. Enjoyment was determined by a single question which asked students: "What was your overall reaction to the program?" Students could respond on a five point scale ranging from "very negative" to "very positive." Closeness of contact was measured by weighing equally students' responses to four questions: (1) "Approximately how many non-American homes and/or apartments did you visit during the program?" (2) "Approximately how many non-American friends did you make during the program?" (3) "How many of these non-American friends do you think you will continue to maintain contact with?" (4) "What percentage of your time was spent with non-Americans during an average week?"

WORLDMINDEDNESS

One of the primary purposes of many international educational programs is to develop a more worldminded outlook among the student participants. For example, the 1966 International Education Act contends that study abroad contributes to international understanding: "Knowledge of other countries is of utmost importance in promoting mutual understanding and cooperation between nations" (Rici, 1968, p. 38). Abrams and Hatch, in a 1960 article concerning the objectives of study abroad programs, state that the furthering of international understanding can mean two things: "(1) an increase in a student's understanding of international relations, or cultivation of the value of worldmindedness, or a disposition in favor of world peace; or (2) im-

provement of relations between peoples as a consequence of increased contact between them" (Abrams and Hatch, 1960, p. 5). These ideas have also been supported by Kelman, who writes: "International interchanges -- provided they are intrinsically useful and satisfying -- are likely to increase world-mindedness and commitment to an internationalist ideology among the participants" (Kelman, 1975, p. 207). Combining these arguments with the theoretical foundations set forth earlier, we can set forth three basic propositions to test:

- I. Positive attitude change on worldmindedness will occur among students participating in the Geneva Semester Program.
- II. Attitude change on worldmindedness will be positively related to the enjoyment of the student's overall experience.
- III. Attitude change on worldmindedness will be positively related to the closeness of contact with non-Americans.

A note of caution needs to be sounded, however, for several earlier studies have found that overseas programs have not led to significant increases in worldmindedness among participants:

In summary, the findings ... indicate that a relatively brief experience in another culture has a limited impact on general attitudes, at least as they are measured over a four to six month time interval. Relatively specific attitudes salient to the experience of the individual ... do change, but more general, deeply rooted attitudes such as world-mindedness and ethnocentrism show a negligible change for most people. These findings agree with the results from other research ... (Smith, 1955, p. 473).

When we examine the before and after scores of students in the Geneva Semester Program as well as the scores of students in the control group, we find limited evidence of change in the students' attitudes. Table 1 reveals a slight increase in the number of students in both

Table 1 about here

groups who were ranked "very high" in the second wave, but overall the pattern of change within both groups appears to have been slight.*

Prudence must be exercised before accepting the results presented in Table 1, however. This analysis occurs at the aggregate level, and the problem of the ecological fallacy therefore arises. We cannot be certain from the data presented here that changes in one direction have not served to cancel out changes in the opposite direction, thus giving the impression of little or no change. Further, the construction of ordinal categories is arbitrary, and different categories could produce different results. These difficulties can be avoided by using regression analysis, and by using multiple regression analysis we can also assess the extent to which attitude change on worldmindedness can be attributed to enjoyment of the experience and closeness of contact with non-Americans. The results presented in Table 2 make it clear that while a

Table 2 about here

strong relationship exists between students' worldmindedness attitudes before and after the program, there is little relationship between this

*Great caution must be used in interpreting the results of the data for the control group because the class size of the group was so small. A shift of only two or three students can lead to large percentage shifts, giving an appearance of far greater change than actually occurred. Blalock (1972) warns against using percentages with such small numbers.

attitude and students' enjoyment of the program and closeness of contact with non-Americans. More precisely, the multiple regression analysis reveals that while a substantial portion of the variation in students' post-worldmindedness scores is explained by their pre-scores, very little of the remaining variation in worldmindedness is explained by either of the other two independent variables, enjoyment of the program and closeness of contact. These findings raise a serious challenge to supporters of study abroad programs who see these experiences as contributing to enhanced international understanding and orientations.

SUPPORT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

A second important and obvious attitude to examine is support for the United Nations. A basic purpose of the Geneva Semester Program is to provide students with the opportunity to study the United Nations system through a variety of methods, including formal coursework, personal observation, and interactions with UN officials. Implicit in this purpose is the supposition that students will not only learn more about the organization, but also may come to increase their support of the organization. We can again set forth three propositions, similar to those tested for worldmindedness:

- IV. Positive attitude change on support for the United Nations will occur among students in the Geneva Semester Program.
- V. Attitude change on support for the United Nations will be positively related to the closeness of contact students have with non-Americans.
- VI. Attitude change on support for the United Nations will be positively related to the enjoyment of the students' overall experience.

Table 3 about here

Table 3 provides one basis for testing proposition IV. The results are interesting. In looking at the scores of the Geneva Semester students, it is readily apparent that only the most miniscule change is indicated. In contrast, substantial increases in levels of support are seen in the before and after scores of the control group. While one must be cautious when working with the small numbers in the control group, the different results of the two groups cannot be ignored. Although the results seemed somewhat surprising to us initially, upon deeper reflection the patterns seemed logical. The control group filled out their after questionnaire on the last day of the regular class immediately following the "wrap-up" lecture by the instructor, emphasizing the progress of the international organization process since World War II. Thus, the students in the control group may have been in a positive mood toward the United Nations because of the presentation of the instructor, a past winner of the college's outstanding teacher award. A further factor in the differences between the two groups may be that the students in the Geneva Semester Program were exposed to aspects of the United Nations in Geneva that could easily temper enhanced enthusiasm for the organization. While these students, like their counterparts at KSU, do study the activities and achievements of the UN in such "high politics" areas as peacekeeping, decolonization, and human rights, the Geneva Semester students come into continuous contact with the Geneva UN bureaucracy which has recently been characterized as bloated, inefficient, and

overpaid (Wall Street Journal, August 11, 1976, pp. 1, ff.). Familiarity may not breed contempt, but our data suggest that these interactions with the UN bureaucrats do not enhance one's view of the organization.

We again undertake multiple regression analysis. While this may appear to be less than a fruitful avenue to explore in light of the results in Table 3, the potential problems with aggregate analysis identified in the previous section require us to utilize this alternative mode of analysis. The data presented in Table 4 present a clear and convincing picture. Students in the Geneva Semester Program did not alter their

Table 4 about here

attitude of support for the organization, and consequently the variables of enjoyment of the experience and closeness of contact with host country nationals did not contribute to change in this attitude.

SELF-ESTEEM AND TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY

Having examined two political attitudes, worldmindedness and UN support, we now turn to an analysis of two psychological variables, self-esteem and tolerance of ambiguity. From our personal experiences in the Kent State Geneva Semester Program, we believed that students might show significant increases in their scores on these two attitudes. Students are subjected to a wide variety of unstructured, unfamiliar situations during the length of the program. These include taking classes from European faculty who conduct their classes quite differently than American professors; adjusting to daily life in a large, cosmopolitan city; and traveling extensively throughout Europe. Students are thus confronted

with numerous ambiguous situations, and we wish to test whether the tolerance of ambiguity of the students will increase. Closely related to this attitude is the variable of self-esteem. Students in the Geneva Semester Programs are presented with many challenges in addition to the constant flow of ambiguous situations which they encounter. Problems of communication, meeting the demands of coursework, and achieving successful social relations within their group are only some of the challenges which students must confront. Success in dealing with these situations may enhance student self-esteem, and hence we wish to test if attitude change does occur on this variable.

While these arguments may appear cogent, an examination of previous scholarship raises serious questions about the likelihood of finding significant change on these variables. McGuigan studied a variety of psychological attitudes of students in a Hollins College study abroad program and reached the conclusion that "modifications of the personality as a result of intercultural experiences are rather rare" (McGuigan, 1958, p. 59). A recent study by Nash points to rather similar results. Nash's examination of students in the University of Connecticut's junior year in France did find significant increases in certain psychological attitudes; but no significant change was noted for students' tolerance of ambiguity and flexibility, nor were significant increases found for self-assurance or self-confidence (Nash, 1976).

Looking first at the attitude of self-esteem, we set forth three hypotheses similar to those used in examining the political attitudes:

- VII. Positive attitude change on self-esteem will occur among students in the Geneva Semester Program.

VIII. Attitude change on self-esteem will be positively related to the closeness of contact with non-Americans.

IX. Attitude change on self-esteem will be positively related to the students' overall enjoyment of the experience.

The data in Table 5 show that the Geneva Semester students appear

Table 5 about here

to have undergone substantial increases in their levels of self-esteem whereas the control group's scores tended to decrease slightly. Considerable variation can be seen in comparing before and after scores for the Geneva Semester group. Especially noticeable is the substantial increase in the number of students in the "very high" category after the program. While only six percent of the students were in this category before the program, 21 percent were classified "very high" after the program. Roughly the same number of students were in the "high" category before and after the program, but in comparing the "moderately high" ranking, we can see that there are substantially fewer students in this category after the program. We thus tentatively accept the proposition that the Geneva Semester students increased their attitudes of self-esteem.

Once again we turn to multiple regression analysis to analyze not only the before and after scores on self-esteem, but also the contribution to attitude change by the variables of enjoyment of the experience and closeness of contact with non-Americans. In regard to the relationship between students' self-esteem before and after the program, we can

observe from Table 6 that there is a definite relationship between the

Table 6 about here

two scores. This relationship is, however, much weaker than we observed in comparing the before and after scores of students on worldmindedness and UN support. Less than 50 percent of the variation in the after scores on self-esteem can be explained by the before scores. In examining the other two independent variables, we find that enjoyment of the experience is not an important "predictor" of attitude change, but closeness of contact does help to account for variation in students' self-esteem scores left unexplained by their scores before the program started. We can thus conclude that students' attitudes on self-esteem did indeed undergo significant change, and the extent of contact with non-Americans is an important variable associated with this change.

Turning now to the attitude of tolerance of ambiguity, once again we set forth three propositions:

- X. Positive attitude change on tolerance of ambiguity will occur among student participants in the Geneva Semester Program.
- XI. Attitude change on tolerance of ambiguity will be positively related to closeness of contact with non-Americans.
- XII. Attitude change on tolerance of ambiguity will be positively related to the students' overall enjoyment of the experience.

Has significant change occurred on tolerance of ambiguity? An examination of Table 7 reveals that in the aggregate, the scores of the students in the Geneva Semester Program tended to decrease slightly while

the scores of the control group tended to increase slightly. The amount of change evidenced in both groups is relatively small, however. In examining the Geneva Semester group more closely, we see that while the same number of students were ranked high in tolerance of ambiguity before and after the program, ten percent fewer students were in the moderate/high category after the program than before the program. These results clearly lead us to reject proposition IX that positive attitude change would occur among students in the program in regard to tolerance of ambiguity.

Multiple regression analysis provides interesting results in regard to this attitude. The data in Table 8 reveal that students' scores

Table 8 about here

on this attitude after the program can be predicted to a substantial degree by their scores before the program began. In contrast to the pattern found in examining the other attitudes, however, both the independent variables of enjoyment of the program and closeness of contact account for portions of the variation in tolerance of ambiguity left unexplained by students' attitudes prior to the program. This is especially true for closeness of contact with non-Americans.

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings. In this study, we have examined the question of whether students in the Kent State University Geneva Semester Program underwent significant attitude change on worldmindedness, support for the United Nations, self-esteem, and tolerance of ambiguity. Our analysis

indicates that a significant degree of change occurred only on the variable of self-esteem, with students tending to increase their level of self-esteem. These findings are consistent with the results of the preponderance of earlier studies on the impact of overseas programs on attitudes, for most empirical studies have found relatively little evidence of significant attitude change.

We were also interested in testing hypotheses suggested by social psychology theory that attitude changes would be significantly related to two key independent variables, closeness of contact with non-Americans and overall enjoyment of the overseas experience. Using multiple regression analysis to test the importance of these variables, our results strongly supported the view advanced by Smith over two decades ago: "What a person's general attitudes will be after such a heterogeneous experience as being in another country is determined more by what his attitudes are like before he leaves home than by what happens to him while he is away" (Smith, 1955, pp. 474-475). Nonetheless, we did find some evidence that the variables of enjoyment of the experience and contact with non-Americans did have some effect upon the psychological attitudes which we studied. Specifically, both independent variables helped to account for attitude change in tolerance of ambiguity, and closeness of contact with non-Americans helped to explain changes in self-esteem. These results clearly reject the generalization of effect or halo theory set forth by Salter and Teger, who argue that enjoyment of an overseas experience is the key to positive attitude change. Our analysis shows that the extent of contact with non-Americans is a more important factor in attitude change, although the

impact is on psychological and not political attitudes.

Implications for Overseas Study Programs. What are the implications of these results for overseas study programs? Assuredly the cumulative evidence of this and earlier studies raises serious doubts about the impact of such programs on student attitudes. And if attitudes are not affected significantly, then there is no basis for assuming that behavioral changes of student participants are likely to occur. It would appear, then, that some of the hopes of proponents of overseas educational programs have not been realized, and claims about the potentiality of these programs need to be given some careful scrutiny.

The picture should not be conceived as completely bleak, however. In the first place, the results of these studies of overseas programs are quite similar to the results of studies of attitude change among students taking traditional political science courses in the United States. As James Lamare has pointed out in a recent survey of the literature, before-and-after studies of attitude change "suggest a pattern of reinforcement and accentuation, but not radical alteration" of student attitudes and orientations (Lamare, 1975, p. 428). A second consideration is that overseas educational programs may offer many positive benefits to the learning experience that cannot be achieved through more traditional classroom learning. An overseas program may offer a more stimulating learning environment and hence enhance the learning process. Furthermore, the types of direct contacts with the subject matter of concern and the possibilities for experiential learning may well contribute to deeper and longer retention of information and insights by the students. A final suggestion is that these types of pro-

grams may have impacts upon attitudes, orientations, and interests which have not yet been studied. All of these possibilities deserve close study by scholars interested in overseas educational programs.

Regardless of what future research may discover, the results of the studies undertaken thus far have established that positive developments do not occur automatically in overseas educational programs. If such programs are to have validity, it seems clear that they must be founded upon solid curriculum offerings. Close attention must be given to providing students with quality faculty members, rigorous and sophisticated course offerings, and opportunities to maximize the benefits of the learning environment provided by the overseas program, including enhancing contacts with nationals of the host country.

Future Research Avenues. In concluding this paper, we wish to make a few comments about some future directions we think would be useful in analyzing the data we have collected on the Geneva Semester Program. One obvious concern is to extend the analysis of possible independent variables which might explain significant variation between before and after attitudes. Does previous foreign travel relate to the degree and direction of attitude change? Do psychological variables such as conservatism and dogmatism affect attitude change? Does language facility have an effect? A second concern is studying the behavior of students related to international activities for the purpose of determining if the program seems to have affected the extent to which the students engage in internationally related behavior. Closely related to this is the issue of the links between attitudes and behavior. A final concern of ours involves a follow-up study which we are cur-

rently undertaking of the 52 students to determine if there is any evidence of attitudinal or behavioral changes after the students have been back in the United States for one year. All of these activities should help us not only to evaluate the impacts of the 1977 Geneva Semester Program but also to enhance our general understanding of the effects of political science instruction upon our students.

FIGURE 1
A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE VARIABLES
BEING STUDIED TO ASSESS ATTITUDE CHANGE

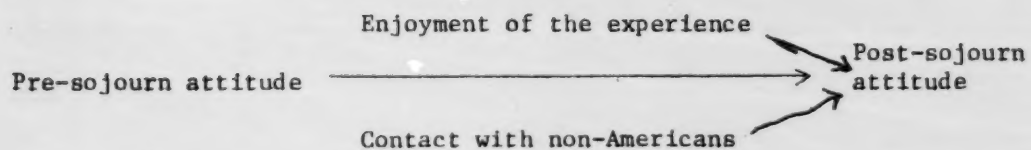


TABLE 1
A COMPARISON OF WORLDMINDEDNESS ATTITUDES OF
GENEVA SEMESTER PROGRAM STUDENTS AND KENT STATE
STUDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR EXPERIENCES

Worldmindedness	Before Scores		After Scores	
	Geneva	KSU	Geneva	KSU
Very High	17% (9)	18% (3)	29% (15)	35% (6)
High	46% (24)	53% (9)	40% (21)	53% (9)
Moderate/High	31% (16)	24% (4)	21% (11)	12% (2)
Moderate/Low	6% (3)	6% (1)	10% (5)	0% (0)
Totals	100% (52)	101% (17)	100% (52)	100% (17)

TABLE 2
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR WORLDMINDEDNESS TIME 2

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient
Constant		3.126
Worldmindedness T ¹	.748	.930
Enjoyment of program	.040	.539
Closeness of contact	.057	.184

Multiple R=.74; R²=.55

TABLE 3
A COMPARISON OF UN SUPPORT ATTITUDES OF
GENEVA SEMESTER PROGRAM STUDENTS AND KENT STATE
STUDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR EXPERIENCES

UN Support	Before Scores		After Scores	
	Geneva	KSU	Geneva	KSU
Very High	4% (2)	0% (0)	4% (2)	6% (1)
High	27% (14)	41% (7)	22% (11)	71% (12)
Moderate/High	40% (21)	47% (8)	43% (22)	24% (4)
Moderate/Low	29% (15)	12% (2)	32% (16)	0% (0)
Totals	100% (52)	100% (17)	101% (51)	101% (17)

TABLE 4
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR UN SUPPORT TIME 2

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient
Constant		.903
UN Support T ¹	.927	.938
Enjoyment of program	.027	.428
Closeness of contact	-.008	-.309

Multiple R=.93; R²=.86

TABLE 5
A COMPARISON OF SELF-ESTEEM ATTITUDES OF
GENEVA SEMESTER PROGRAM STUDENTS AND KENT STATE
STUDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR EXPERIENCES

Self-Esteem	Before Scores		After Scores	
	Geneva	KSU	Geneva	KSU
Very High	6% (3)	18% (3)	21% (11)	6% (1)
High	35% (18)	35% (6)	31% (16)	47% (8)
Moderate/High	48% (25)	35% (6)	31% (16)	41% (7)
Moderate/Low	12% (6)	12% (2)	17% (9)	6% (1)
Totals	101% (52)	100% (17)	100% (52)	100% (17)

TABLE 6
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR SELF-ESTEEM TIME 2

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient
Constant		3.486
Self-Esteem ¹	.647	.887
Enjoyment of program	-.009	-.494
Closeness of contact	.168	.217

Multiple R=.678; R^2 =.460

TABLE 7
A COMPARISON OF TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY ATTITUDES OF
GENEVA SEMESTER PROGRAM STUDENTS AND KENT STATE
STUDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR EXPERIENCES

Tolerance of Ambiguity	Before Scores		After Scores	
	Geneva	KSU	Geneva	KSU
High	10% (5)	6% (1)	10% (5)	18% (3)
Moderate High	58% (30)	53% (9)	48% (25)	59% (10)
Moderate	33% (17)	41% (7)	42% (22)	24% (4)
Totals	101% (52)	100% (17)	100% (52)	101% (17)

TABLE 8
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY TIME 2

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient
Constant		3.068
Tolerance of Ambiguity T ¹	.702	.818
Enjoyment of program	.120	.797
Closeness of contact	.229	.368

Multiple R=.81; R²=.65

REFERENCES

- Christenson, R. M. and P. J. Capretta (1968). "The Impact of College on Political Attitudes," Social Science Quarterly, 49, 315-320.
- Cronbach, L.J. and L. Furby (1970). "How We Should Measure 'Change' -- or Should We?" Psychological Bulletin, 74, 68-80.
- Easton, David and Jack Dennis (1969). Children in the Political System: Origins of Political Legitimacy. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Farley, Lawrence T. and M. Glenn Newkirk (1977). "Measuring Attitudinal Change in Political Science Courses," Teaching Political Science, 4, 185-198.
- Flack, Michael J. (1976). "Results and Effects of Study Abroad," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 424, 107-117.
- Garrison, C. (1968). "Political Involvement and Political Science: A Note on the Basic Course as an Agent of Political Socialization," Social Science Quarterly, 49, 305-314.
- Hess, Robert D. and Judith Torney (1967). The Development of Political Attitudes in Children. Chicago: Aldine.
- Jackman, Mary (1978). "General and Applied Tolerance: Does Education Increase Commitment to Racial Integration?" American Journal of Political Science, 22, 302-324.
- Jacob, Phillip (1957). Changing Values in College: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of College Teaching. New York: Harper and Row.
- Jennings, M. Kent and Gregory B. Markus (1977). "The Effect of Military Service on Political Attitudes: A Panel Study," American Political Science Review, 71, 131-147.
- Kafka, Eric P. "The Effects of Overseas Study on Worldmindedness and Other Selected Variables of Liberal Arts Students," Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1968.
- Kelman, Herbert (1975). "International Interchanges: Some Contributions from Theories of Attitude Change," in William Coplin and J. Martin Rochester, eds., A Multi-Method Introduction to International Politics, 2nd ed. Chicago: Markham, 205-218.
- Key, V.O. (1961). Public Opinion and American Democracy. New York: Alfred K. Knopf.
- Lamare, James W. (1975). "Using Political Science Courses to Inculcate Political Orientations: A Historical Assessment," Teaching Political Science, 2, 400-432.

- Lane, Robert (1968). "Political Education in the Midst of Life's Struggles," Harvard Educational Review, 38, 438-451.
- Leonard, Elizabeth (1964). "Attitude Change in a College Program of Foreign Study and Travel," The Educational Record, 45, 173-181.
- Linn, Robert L. and Jeffrey A. Slinde (1977). "The Determination of the Significance of Change Between Pre- and Posttesting Periods," Review of Educational Research, 47, 121-150.
- Manning, Winton H. and Philip H. DuBois (1962). "Correlational Methods in Research on Human Learning," Perceptual and Motor Skills, 15, 287-321.
- McGuigan, F. S. "Psychological Changes Related to Intercultural Experiences," Psychological Reports, 4, 55-60.
- Middleton, R. and S. Putney (1964). "Influence on the Political Beliefs of American College Students: A Study of Self-Appraisals," Il Politico, 29, 484-492.
- Nash, Dennison (1976). "The Personal Consequences of a Year of Study Abroad," Journal of Higher Education, XLVII, 191-203.
- Pollock, John C. (1975). "Early Socialization and Elite Behavior," in David C. Schwartz and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz, eds., New Directions in Political Socialization. New York: Free Press, 203-226.
- Robinson, John P. (1968) Measures of Political Attitudes. Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center.
- Robinson, John P. and Phillip Shaver (1973). Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes. Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center. Revised edition.
- Rohter, Ira S. (1975). "A Social-Learning Approach to Political Socialization," in David C. Schwartz and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz, eds., New Directions in Political Socialization. New York: Free Press, 129-162.
- Salter, C.A. and A. I. Teger (1975). "Change in Attitudes Toward Other Nations as a Function of the Type of International Contact," Sociometry, 38, 213-222.
- Schwartz, David C. and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz, eds. (1975). New Directions in Political Socialization. New York: Free Press.
- Smith, Howard P. (1955). "Do International Experiences Affect Attitudes?" Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 51, 469-477.
- Somit, A., W. Wilke, and R. Cooley (1970). "The Effect of the Introductory Political Science Course on Student Attitudes Toward Personal Political Participation," in Roberta Sigel, ed., Learning About Politics: A Reader in Political Socialization. New York: Random House, 404-410.